

simply a journalist, recommended by Theophile Gautier for the express purpose of reporting the doings of the court during its *villegiatura*, and in that way refuting the thousand rumours of indescribable orgies at Compiègne, which circulated among the more credulous Parisians. From the record in question, a very accurate one, Zola, who, of course had never been a guest at Compiègne, derived considerable information, but sundry critics, unacquainted with the truth, twitted him for having placed reliance on back-stairs gossip, when in reality he had taken as his guide statements issued with the Emperor's express approval.

But further information was given him by Flaubert, who had visited Compiègne more than once as a court guest. And Goncourt tells us that Flaubert, when questioned by Zola, proceeded to mimic the late sovereign in characteristic fashion, walking up and down with his figure bent, resting one hand on his back, and twirling his moustache with the other, while mumbling idiotic remarks. "Is Napoleon III," added Flaubert, by way of comment, "was unadulterated stupidity"; to which proposition. Goncourt retorted, wittily and with great truth, that stupidity was usually loquacious, whereas the Emperor's had been silent stupidity. "It was that which made his strength, it allowed one to

suppose everything."<sup>1</sup> JSTo better judgment  
than this was  
ever passed on Napoleon III. For twenty years  
the world  
regarded him as "deep," though, in reality,  
he was in  
many respects a fool, one who would never  
even have

trodition to the English version of " Son Excellence Eugene  
Bougon " (" His  
Excellency," London, Chatto, and JTew York, Macmillan, 1897  
*et seq.*), it is  
stated in error that the articles first appeared in " Le Figaro,"  
whereas it was  
the latter's companion-print, " L'Evenement," which issued  
them.

<sup>1</sup> " Journal des Goncourt," Yol. Y, p. 190 (March 7, 1875).